

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
8 December 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Current Strength of the  
North Vietnamese Army

1. The intelligence community has long been dissatisfied with the state of its information on North Vietnamese Army (PAVN) order of battle. A major effort to improve this situation was put under way during the production of NIE 14.3-64, The Outlook for North Vietnam, 4 March 1964. Because of the inherent difficulties

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] our estimates on this subject, while presented with moderate confidence in terms of general orders of magnitude, may lag many months in terms of changes in strength or even of dispositions. This would be particularly true in a situation in which the PAVN was undergoing a rapid buildup through conscription and the formation of new units, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

2. Whatever base figure is used for PAVN strength in North Vietnam--NIE 14.3-64 gave a spread of from 200,000 to 250,000 for March 1964--it is almost certain that the figure is now considerably higher. Despite the infiltration of large numbers of PAVN troops into South Vietnam

ARMY review(s) completed.

over the years--earlier in the form of cadres only and most recently in units--there is little doubt that the army has been taking in new recruits at a rate considerably above attrition, retirement, and the dispatch of men to South Vietnam.

3. A large-scale mobilization has been under way in the DRV this year. There is evidence which indicates that most of the 4 million draft-age males in the DRV have now either been enrolled in the regular armed forces, some paramilitary organization, or labor repair and maintenance battalions. Given the PAVN's limited absorption capacity, it is probable that the bulk of the mobilized males have been placed in paramilitary organizations where they can be controlled and given some training. As they can be accommodated and are needed, they will be pulled into the regular armed forces. While exact figures are unavailable, we estimate on the basis of the above assumptions that approximately 40-50,000 have already been introduced into the PAVN this year. If that is so, the current strength of the PAVN is probably about 300,000 men.

4. It appears that most of the PAVN units sent south during the past year have been composite elements, made up of PAVN regulars pulled from several different organic divisions or brigades of the DRV Army. The gaps left in the organic units have apparently been filled quickly by draftees in the case of enlisted men, or by promotions in the case of officers. Hanoi no doubt believes these replacements can be quickly trained up to par by personnel still forming the backbone of the organic units.

5. We can see no reason why Hanoi cannot continue to use this process, at least on the scale so far observed during 1965, to pump well-trained PAVN regulars into the South, while at the same time suffering no significant weakening qualitatively or quantitatively of PAVN fighting capabilities in the DRV.

PAVN IN NORTH VIETNAM

REGULAR ARMY (PAVN)	265,000 - 300,000*
Combat Troops	205,000
Support Troops	60,000
Public Security Forces (APSF)	27,100
Militia (potential)	2,000,000
	2,292,100

There are 7 divisions, 7 brigades, 35 independent regiments, and 10 independent battalions organic to PAVN.

PAVN IN SOUTH VIETNAM

REGULAR PAVN UNITS	10,650
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There are 7 regiments deployed to South Vietnam. MACV also carries two other PAVN regiments as possibly being in South Vietnam. This total does not include PAVN cadre in Viet Cong units.

PAVN IN LAOS

Troop Strength	9,000
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Approximately 5,000 troops are deployed in ten battalions. Another 4,000 troops are operating in company-size elements and as advisers to Pathet Lao units.

\*It is estimated that an additional 40-50,000 males have been drafted into the PAVN.

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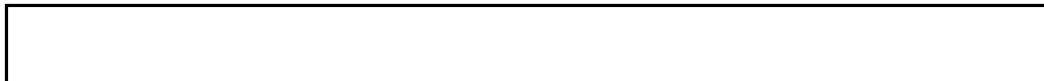
## INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

### THE CURRENT STRENGTH OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY

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